

MIGHTY MASTERS!

2024



TopCrew Academy

A Guide to Strength
Training for Masters Rowers

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STRENGTH TRAINING FOR MASTERS ROWERS

As a masters rower, you're no stranger to the physical and mental demands of rowing. But as we get older, our bodies change, and it becomes even more important to focus on training that supports our health and performance. This is where strength training comes in.

Strength training isn't just about lifting heavy weights or building big muscles; it's about preparing your body to row better, stay injury-free, and enjoy the sport for many years to come. For masters rowers, strength training can make a huge difference in how you feel in the boat, how fast you go, and how much you enjoy your rowing.

KEY BENEFITS OF STRENGTH TRAINING FOR MASTERS ROWERS

Improved Power and Endurance on the Water

Strength training builds the muscle power needed to drive each stroke more effectively, helping you maintain a steady pace and row longer without tiring.

Stronger muscles make each stroke more efficient, allowing for longer distances and better performance, especially for masters rowers.

Reduced Risk of Injury

Strength training strengthens muscles, tendons, and ligaments, providing stability and reducing the risk of common rowing injuries like back pain and shoulder strains.

It also helps correct muscle imbalances, promoting better rowing form and lowering injury risk.

Increased Muscle Strength & Bone Density

It helps build and maintain muscle mass, essential for strength and resilience as you age.

Weight-bearing exercises enhance bone density, reducing the risk of osteoporosis and fractures, allowing you to train confidently.

Better Technique & Efficiency

Strength training improves posture and technique throughout the rowing stroke. Core exercises stabilize the trunk, enhancing power transfer from legs to the oar.

A strong, stable body enables better focus on technique, timing, and coordination, leading to more efficient rowing.

Did You Know?

As we age, we naturally lose about 3-5% of our muscle mass per decade after the age of 30. Strength training is one of the most effective ways to slow this process and maintain both muscle mass and strength, which is essential for masters rowers who want to stay competitive and injury-free.

YOUR YEAR-LONG STRENGTH TRAINING PLAN

To get the most out of your strength training, it's crucial to follow a structured plan that evolves throughout the year. This approach, known as periodization, helps you build strength progressively, prevent overtraining, and peak at the right time for your most important races. Here's how your training year should be organized:

BLOCK	DURATION	MONTHS	SETS & REPS	WEIGHT
General Preparation	12 - 16 Weeks	June - September	3 - 5 Sets of 8-12 reps	Moderate
Specific Preparation	12 - 16 Weeks	September - January	3 - 5 Sets of 4 -6 reps	Heavy
Pre-Competitive	8 - 12 Weeks	January - April	5 - 6 Sets of 2 - 5 reps	Moderate - Heavy
Competitive	6 - 8 Weeks	April - End May	3 - 4 Sets of 4 - 8 reps	Moderate

EXPLANATION OF EACH BLOCK

The key to success as a busy rower isn't necessarily more training—it's better training. By focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, you can achieve superior results in less time. I want to introduce you to a new way of thinking about your training, one that prioritizes quality over quantity and ensures that every minute you spend working out moves you closer to your goals.

General Prep Jun - Sep	Focus on building a foundation of strength with moderate weights and higher reps to enhance muscle endurance. This phase builds muscle mass and prepares your body for heavier training later on.
Specific Prep Sep - Jan	Shift to heavier weights and lower reps to increase strength and power specific to rowing. This phase continues to build muscle mass while developing the muscle force needed to propel the boat effectively.
Pre-Comp Jan - Apr	Prioritize power and explosiveness with moderate-heavy weights and fewer reps, aiming to maximize speed of movement in order to power output and convert strength into rowing-specific power.
Competitive Apr - May	Maintain strength and power with moderate weights and reps, focusing on staying sharp for races without overloading your body, so that you can perform at your best in rowing specific training and events.

KEY MOVEMENT TYPES FOR ROWING STRENGTH

In strength training, it's important to focus on movements that improve your rowing performance. Here are the key types of movements you should include in your weekly workouts, along with examples for each type:

Incorporating Movements Into Your Weekly Routine

Each week, aim to incorporate all of these movement types into your workouts. This doesn't mean you should do every exercise in every session; instead, spread them out across the week. For example, you might focus on squats and horizontal pulls one day, and then hinge movements and vertical pushes on another day. The goal is to cover all the bases over the course of the week, ensuring balanced muscle development and effective rowing performance.

Movement Type	Example Exercises	Movement Type	Example Exercises
Squat	Goblet Squat, Back Squat, Front Squat	Hinge	Deadlift, Romanian Deadlift, Trapbar Dead
Horizontal Push	Bench Press, Push Up, Incline Bench	Horizontal Pull	Bent-Over Row, Cable Row, One-Arm Row
Vertical Push	Overhead Press, DB Shoulder Press	Vertical Pull	Pull up, Lat Pull Down
Static Lunge	Split Squat, Bulgarian Split Squat	Dynamic Lunge	Walking Lunge, Reverse Lunge,
Core	Ab Roll out, Plank, Hanging leg Raises	Carry	Farmers Walk, Suitcase Carry,

Why These Movements Matter:

Squat and Hinge Movements: These build leg strength and power, essential for the drive phase of the rowing stroke.

Push and Pull Movements: These strengthen the upper body, helping with the finish of the stroke and maintaining posture.

Lunges: These improve balance and strengthen the muscles used for stabilizing your body during rowing.

Core Exercises: A strong core helps transfer power from your legs to your arms, making your rowing more efficient.

Carries: These enhance grip strength and core stability, both crucial for controlling the oar and maintaining good posture.

By focusing on these key movements and following a structured year-long plan, you'll build the strength needed to improve your rowing performance, stay injury-free, and enjoy the sport for years to come.



KEY PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE STRENGTH TRAINING

To get the most out of your strength training program, it's important to follow a few key principles. These principles will help you train smarter, avoid injuries, and make the best use of your time in the gym.

Consistency is Key:

Train regularly with moderate intensity to build strength gradually and reduce injury risk. Aim for consistent sessions each week, even if they are shorter.

Progressive Overload:

Gradually increase the weight, reps, or sets over time to get stronger. Start with a manageable weight and increase it slowly as you maintain good form.

Rest and Recovery:

Allow time for muscles to repair and grow stronger by including rest days, especially after heavy lifting. Listen to your body and take breaks if you feel overly tired or sore to prevent overtraining.

Listen to Your Body:

Pay attention to how your body feels. If you experience pain or discomfort, adjust your exercises or reduce weight. Focus on safe, effective movement over lifting heavier weights.

Focus on Technique:

Proper form is essential for safety and effectiveness. Start with lighter weights to perfect your technique, and seek feedback from a coach if needed.

NEXT STEPS: TAKE YOUR TRAINING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

You've learned the basics of strength training for masters rowers. Now, it's time to put this knowledge into action. Here's how to get started and make the most of your training:

Start with a Plan:

Create a training plan using the periodization blocks from this guide and adjust based on your needs and how your body responds. If you're new, start with basic exercises and focus on mastering them before moving on.

Track Your Progress:

Use a training log to record workouts, weights, reps, and how you feel after each session. This helps you see progress and make necessary adjustments.

Ask for Help:

If you need guidance or advice, reach out. Our coaches are here to assist you with technique checks or personalized adjustments.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Remember, strength training is a journey, not a destination. By following the principles outlined in this guide, you'll build a strong foundation that supports your rowing performance and overall health. Stay consistent, listen to your body, and enjoy the process of getting stronger and more powerful every day.

SAMPLE 3-DAY STRENGTH PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER

Get started with this full-body strength training plan

For this **Specific Prep Phase**, we recommend a 3-day per week full-body strength training program. This program will help you build overall muscle mass and strength, focusing on different aspects of your body each day.

Program Overview:

Day 1: Balanced Full-Body Day (Hypertrophy)

Day 2: Posterior-Focused Full-Body Day (Strength)

Day 3: Anterior-Focused Full-Body Day (Strength)

DAY 1: BALANCED FULL-BODY DAY (HYPERTROPHY)

This day focuses on building muscle size and endurance across all major muscle groups with moderate weights and higher reps.

Exercise	Movement Type	Sets & Reps	Notes
Barbell Back Squat	Squat	3 x 8-10	Use a moderate weight, focus on a controlled movement down and full range of motion
DB Bench Press	Horizontal Push	3 x 8-10	Keep your feet grounded and core tight. Lower the bar slowly.
Prone Row	Horizontal Pull	3 x 8-10	Keep your chest on the bench - think about pulling yourself to the bar. Keep your shoulder blades back and down
DB Alternating Press	Vertical Push	3 x 8-10 each side	Core tight, and use a weight that allows you full control through the lift.
Romanian Deadlift	Hinge	3 x 8-10	Focus on hip hinge and keep the bar in contact with your legs
Plank	Core	3 x 30-45s	Body straight, shoulder blades back and down. Breathe into your stomach.

DAY 2: POSTERIOR-FOCUSED FULL-BODY DAY (STRENGTH)

This day emphasizes strengthening the muscles along the back of the body, using heavier weights and lower reps to build maximal strength.

Exercise	Movement Type	Sets & Reps	Notes
Trapbar Deadlift	Hinge	4 x 4-6	Use a moderate weight, focus on a controlled movement down and full range of motion
Pull Up	Vertical Pull	4 x 4-6	Use a band if necessary
DB Incline Bench	Horizontal Push	3 x 8-10	Use a weight that is challenging but allows full range of motion.
Seated Row	Horizontal Pull	3 x 6-8	Pull with your back muscles, not your arms. Pause at the end of each pull.
DB Reverse Lunge	Dynamic Lunge	3 x 6-8 each side	Focus on control and stability. Push through your front heel to return to standing. Do all the reps on one side, then swap.
Farmers Carry	Carry	3 x 30-40m	Use heavy dumbbells or a trapbar keep your shoulders back and core tight.



DAY 3: ANTERIOR-FOCUSED FULL-BODY DAY (STRENGTH)

This day focuses on building muscle size and endurance across all major muscle groups with moderate weights and higher reps.

Exercise	Movement Type	Sets & Reps	Notes
DB Goblet Squat	Squat	4 x 6-8	Keep the chest up and elbows high; use the heaviest dumbbell you can.
Barbell Bench Press	Horizontal Push	4 x 6-8	Keep your feet grounded and core tight. Lower the bar slowly.
Barbell Hip Thrust	Glute Extension	3 x 4-6	Focus on engaging the glutes and maintaining a strong core.
Bulgarian Split Squat	Static Lunge	3 x 6-8 each side	Maintain balance and control throughout the movement.
DB Overhead Press	Vertical Push	3 x 6-8	Use a weight that allows full control throughout the lift.
Ab Rollout	Core	3 x 10	Body straight, shoulder blades back and down. Breathe into your stomach.

GUIDELINES FOR THE SAMPLE PROGRAM

- **Warm-Up Properly:** Always begin with a 10-15 minute warm-up to increase your heart rate and prepare your muscles. Include dynamic stretches and light cardio activities like jogging or rowing.
- **Focus on Form:** Proper form is essential for preventing injuries and ensuring you target the right muscles. Start with lighter weights to master each movement before progressing to heavier weights.
- **Adjust Intensity as Needed:** The weights should be challenging but manageable. If you find the sets too difficult, reduce the weight slightly or adjust the reps. As you get stronger, gradually increase the weight.
- **Rest and Recovery:** Allow 1-2 days between sessions for recovery. If possible, avoid strength training on days you do high-intensity training.
- **Stay Hydrated and Fuel Up:** Proper hydration and nutrition are critical to support your workouts and recovery. Ensure you consume enough protein, carbohydrates, and healthy fats to fuel your training and repair your muscles.
- **Listen to Your Body:** Pay attention to how you feel during and after workouts. If you experience unusual pain or discomfort, consider adjusting the exercise or consult with a coach or healthcare professional.

DISCLAIMER

This 3-day per week program is designed to help you build strength, improve your rowing performance, and maintain your health and fitness. It is not a substitute for medical advice. Always consult a physician prior to commencing a new program.

Who Am I?

Sam Dutney is an accomplished Australian rower and coach, with over 18 years of coaching experience helping rowers of all levels achieve their best.

With more than 1000 athletes coached, across three Australian states, and a litany of successful crews and athletes, Sam is the expert in helping busy rowers make the most of their limited time while still achieving outstanding results.

As a busy professional, a dad of twins, and a former competitive rower who transitioned into coaching, Sam has a deep understanding of the sport as both an athlete and a coach as well as firsthand understanding of the challenges busy rowers face.

With a background in sport science and a passion for performance optimization, Sam has guided crews to club, state and national success. Known for his expertise in time-efficient training methods and personalised coaching, Sam is dedicated to helping busy rowers excel on the water without sacrificing balance in their lives

Train Smart & Row Fast – Without the Burnout

This guide is designed specifically for masters rowers who want to enhance their strength, power, and endurance without overhauling their busy schedules.

If you need help making the most of your rowing, send me a message on Whatsapp +61 404 233 632 or send me a DM on Instagram (@topcrew_academy)



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